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SCIENCE

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FRIDAY, JUNE 19, 1896.

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ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT BEFORE THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.*

THE Presidency of the Society for Psychical Research resembles a mousetrap. Broad is the path and wide the way that leadeth thereinto. Flattering bait is spread before the entrance: The distinguished names of one's predecessors in the office; the absence of any active duties; England and America symbolically made one in that higher republic where no disputed frontiers or foreign offices exist; and all the rest of it. But when the moment comes to retrace one's steps and go back to private life, like Cincinnatus to his plough, then comes the sorrow, then the penalty for greatness. The careless presidential mouse finds the wires all pointing against him, and to get out there is no chance, unless he leave some portion of his fur. So in resigning my office to my worthier successor, I send this address to be read across the ocean as my ransom, not unaware, as I write it, that the few things I can say may well fall short of the dignity of the occasion and the needs of the cause for which our Society exists.

Were psychical research as well organized as the other sciences are, the plan of a presidential address would be mapped out in advance. It could be nothing but a report

* Read at the Annual Meeting of the Society in London on January 31st, 1896, and also at meetings of the American Branch in Boston on January 31st and New York on February 1st, 1896.